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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: COR SPEAKER MASHADANI CALLS ARAB PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

REF: BAGHDAD 784

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) This is an action request, see para 5.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani hailed the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) Conference as a success in his meeting with the Ambassador on March 15. Mashadani recounted his discussions with representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Iraq's neighbors. He also highlighted his goal of moving the headquarters of the APU from Syria to Baghdad. Mashadani called the new Iraq flag flown in Irbil during the conference a symbol of unity and pointed out that throughout the conference President Jalal Talabani emphasized that the Kurdish region is part of Iraq. End summary.

APU CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

[1](#)3. (C) CoR Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani told the Ambassador on March 15 that the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) Conference was a resounding success. Mashadani co-chaired the opening and closing sessions, along with President Jalal Talabani, KRG President Barzani, APU Secretary General Nour Eddin Bouchkouj and APU President (and Jordanian Parliament Speaker) Abd al-Hadi al-Majali (reftel). Issues discussed, said Mashadani, included the Iranian situation, balancing the tense relations between the Turks and Kurds, and exploring the possibility of Iraq joining the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Mashadani noted he was invited by the Kuwaitis to visit, and met with virtually every delegation present, including the Algerians and Egyptians.

MASHADANI FOCUSES ON BUILDING BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS

[1](#)4. (C) Mashadani said the new Iraqi flag, prominently flown during the conference, was seen as a symbol of unity by Iraq's neighbors. He also remarked that President Jalal Talabani "talked like an Arab" during the conference, reinforcing the message that the KRG is part of Iraq. Mashadani noted that delegates from some of the Arab neighbors had initially expressed fear at coming to a conference in the Kurdish region, but left with a positive opinion. Mashadani discussed at length his goal to move the headquarters of the APU from Syria to Baghdad, a move he said would "help solidify the Arab identity of Baghdad." The Ambassador congratulated the Speaker on the successful APU conference in Irbil, highlighting the importance of Iraq building strong bilateral relationships with its Arab neighbors. Mashadani made a point of saying that Prime Minister Maliki should improve relations with the GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia.

COMMENT/ACTION REQUEST

15. (C) The APU conference was a step in the right direction in terms of Iraq's relations with the Arab world, especially in the aftermath of Iranian President Ahmadinejad's visit here, and Embassy Baghdad is grateful to our colleagues in neighboring missions who encouraged their host country governments to send parliamentary delegations to the conference. We intend to follow up by urging PM Maliki to build upon this event by redoubling his efforts to build bridges with his Arab neighbors. Post requests that the Department consider instructing posts in the GCC/Iraq's neighbors to continue (as opportunity presents) to encourage their host governments to accelerate the establishment and staffing of their diplomatic missions in Iraq.

CROCKER